

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
7 October 2004 (07.10.2004)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2004/085293 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: B65G 47/52,
63/00

(21) International Application Number:
PCT/SE2004/000419

(22) International Filing Date: 22 March 2004 (22.03.2004)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
0306823.6 25 March 2003 (25.03.2003) GB

(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US):
FLEXLINK COMPONENTS AB [SE/SE]; S-415
50 Göteborg (SE).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): TUCK, Henry,

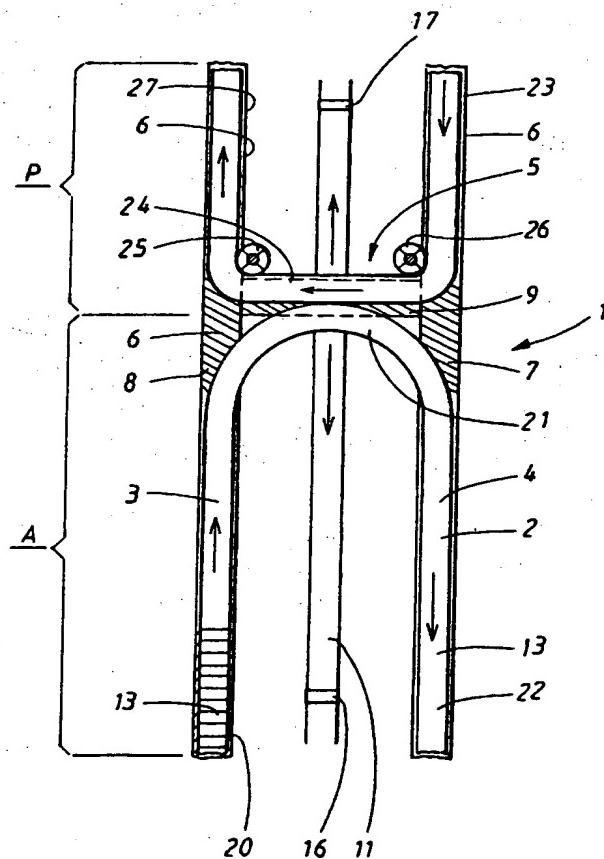
W. [GB/GB]; 67, Goodyers Avenue, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 8AZ (GB). LOCK, Terry, W. [GB/GB]; 29 Rosemullion Avenue, Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes, MK4 3AH Buckinghamshire (GB). WRIGHT, Clive [GB/GB]; 9 Snowbell Road Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent TN23 3NF (GB).

(74) Agent: ALBIHNS GÖTEBORG AB; Box 142, S-402 21 Göteborg (SE).

(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NA, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: A VARIABLE CAPACITY STORE FOR ELONGATED ARTICLES



(57) Abstract: A variable capacity store comprising a set of conveyor means superpositioned on top of and connected to each other. The conveyor means includes an endless conveyor being arranged in a generally H-shaped pattern including two parallel elongated portions and a transverse portion, which is movable along said elongated portions.

WO 2004/085293 A1



- (84) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

Published:

— *with international search report*

12v/PRTS.

1

10/550261

A variable capacity store for elongated articles

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a variable capacity store for elongated articles. In particular the invention relates to a variable capacity store of the FIFO type, where goods stored in the reservoir leave the store in the same order as they were introduced. Furthermore the invention relates to the type of variable capacity store which includes an endless conveyer being subdivided into an active path, which is capable of transporting goods and a passive path functioning as a store for the endless conveyor. In this type of variable capacity stores, the capacity is altered by changing the length of the active path by removing part of the active path from the passive path or by introducing part of the passive path into the active path.

15. BACKGROUND ART

A variable capacity store for elongated articles where an endless conveyor is subdivided into an active path and a passive path is previously known from EP 738478. EP 738478 discloses a variable-capacity store for elongated articles. The store comprises an input station and an output station located in series along a path along which elongated articles are fed. The articles are fed by a single endless conveyor, which is subdivided into an active path and a passive path. The active path extends from the input station to the output station and the passive path extends from the output station to the input station. The active path is formed by a part of the endless conveyer, which is wound around a first set of drums in a first spiral. The passive path, or return branch, is formed by a part of the endless conveyor, which is wound around a second set of drums in a second spiral.

A drawback of the variable capacity store of the above type is that the transfer between the active path and passive path is performed at a single point, which is where the endless conveyer leaves the first spiral to enter the second spiral or vice versa, in dependence of whether the active path should

- be lengthened or shortened. The friction between the drums and the endless conveyor will increase as the number of turns increases from the point of entrance where the active and passive paths are connected. This implies that, when trying to change the division between the active path and passive
- 5 path, by removing part of the active path from the passive path or by introducing part of the passive path into the active path, the tension of the chain will increase from the point of entrance where the active and passive paths are connected as the number of turns increases. When a reservoir is used in a process which has relatively large short term variations in the
- 10 capacity of a delivering device, which is arranged to feed the reservoir, and a receiving device, which is arranged to be fed by the reservoir, it is of importance that the capacity of the reservoir can be altered quickly. A limiting factor in this regard, is that the endless conveyor is designed to support a maximum tension. The tension in the endless conveyor is dependent on the
- 15 velocity of the change of length of the active and passive path. Since the tension in the endless conveyor increases as the number of turns increases, the maximum feed in- feed or feed out velocity from the active path will be determined from the tension in the chain at the last turn, calculated from the point of entrance. For a conveyor of a determined rigidity, there will be a
- 20 maximum number of turns allowed for a specific maximum feed in- feed or feed out velocity from the active path. If the designer would need more turns in order to create a larger variable capacity store, the designer would have to contemplate to make a more rigid conveyor, which in turn would increase the weight of the chain and thus require a complete redesign of the store.
- 25
- #### DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION
- One object of the invention is to provide a variable capacity store in which allow a freedom in design of the number of layers in an active path without a corresponding increase in tension of the chain as the number of turns
- 30 increases, such that the response to short term variations can be quick even for relatively large stores comprising a plurality of turns in the active path.

- This object is achieved by a variable capacity store according to the characterising portion of claim 1. The invention relates to a variable capacity store comprising a set of conveyor means superpositioned on top of and connected to each other. Since a number of conveyor means are
- 5 superpositioned on top of each other, the capacity of the store can be designed by deciding how many layers should be used. Since each layer works independently from the other layers of the store, the addition of a layer does not alter the design of the layers already present in the store. This type of store can therefore be redesigned in order to meet changed requirements
- 10 of capacity only by adding a layer and replacing the input or output station of the store, depending on which side the additional layer is positioned. The other parts of the store do not need to be altered. Each layer is formed by a conveyor means.
- 15 The invention makes use of conveyor means includes an endless conveyor being arranged in a generally H-shaped pattern including two parallel elongated portions and a transverse portion, which is movable along said elongated portions. The H-shaped pattern is, by said transverse portion, divided into an active path positioned one side of the transverse portion and
- 20 a passive path positioned on the other side, wherein the capacity of the conveyor means is arranged to be varied by displacing the transverse portion and thereby increasing or decreasing the proportion between the active path and passive path.
- 25 Since the layers are formed by essentially a single endless conveyor, the tension in an endless conveyer in one layer will be independent of the tension in an endless conveyer in another layer. It is therefore possible to arrange a store with a multiplicity of layers without a corresponding increase in tension of the chain as the number of layers increases, such that the
- 30 response to short term variations cab be quick even for relatively large stores comprising a plurality of layers.

The H-shaped endless conveyors are connected to each other by transfer means arranged between said active paths of conveyor means. The transfer means is preferably formed by a curved conveyor path extending from an end of an elongated portion on one side of a first generally H-shaped endless conveyor toward an end of an elongated portion on the opposite side of a second generally H-shaped endless conveyor positioned on top of said first generally H-shaped endless conveyor.

In a still further preferred embodiment the curved conveyor path is formed by
10 an extension of the generally H-shaped endless conveyor in one or both of
two interconnected conveyor means superpositioned on top of and
connected to each other.

In yet another preferred embodiment of the invention each transverse portion
15 in the set of conveyor means is individually displaceable along the elongated
portions of the H-shaped conveyor means, such that the capacity of each
conveyor means in said set of conveyor means is controlled independently
from the capacity of other conveyor means in said set. This embodiment is
particularly advantageous since even if the drive for change of position of the
20 transverse portion is stuck or becomes inoperative for some other reason,
the capacity of the store will be variable, due to the variation of the capacity
of the remaining layers.

The invention also relates to a variable store arrangement comprising a first
25 and a second variable capacity store as described above. According to this
embodiment the active paths together with the transfer means of the first
variable capacity store forms a first conveyor path which is arranged to
perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means to the next
conveyor means in said set of conveyor means in a first direction.
30 Furthermore, the active paths together with the transfer means of the second
variable capacity store forms a second conveyor path which is arranged to
perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means to the next

conveyor means in said set of conveyor means in a second direction opposite to said first direction.

- In the embodiment, the active paths together with the transfer means of the
- 5 second variable capacity store forms a second conveyor path which is arranged to perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means to the next conveyor means in said set of conveyor means in a second direction opposite to said first direction.
- 10 The elongated portions of the second variable capacity store are positioned between the elongated portions of the first variable capacity store and the transfer means of the second variable capacity store is positioned between the transfer means and the transverse portion of the second variable capacity store, whereby the first conveyor path is essentially circumventing the second
- 15 transportation path.

- A variable store arrangement arranged as indicated above provides is very compact, by which is meant that a large amount of goods can be stored on a relatively small area, furthermore, the input and output to the store
- 20 arrangement can be arranged at approximately the same height. This is an advantage, if a production in a factory is done in essentially a single plane. In this case, the need for a lift or a downdrop, which normally would follow a variable capacity store where the input and output is arranged at different heights is removed.
- 25 Preferably, the generally H-shaped patterns of said first variable capacity store is vertically displaced from said generally H-shaped patterns of said second variable capacity store. By this arrangement , the transverse portions of respective first and second variable capacity store is prevented from
- 30 colliding with each other.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the invention will be described in detail below, with references to the appended drawings, where:

- 5 Fig. 1 shows a top view of a conveyor means including an endless conveyor being arranged in a generally H-shaped pattern.
- Fig. 2 shows a view from below of the conveyor shown in figure 1.
- 10 Fig. 3 shows a side view of a conveyor means including a drive means for a support for the transverse portion of the H-shaped conveyor means.
- 15 Fig. 4 shows a top view of the conveyor in fig 1, where the transverse portion is moved to an end position, wherein the storage capacity is at a minimum for the store and a first embodiment of transfer means for transferring goods from one layer to another layer in the set of H-shaped endless conveyors stacked on top of each other.
- 20 Fig. 5 shows an end view of a set of H-shaped conveyors stacked on top of each other, where transfer means are arranged to transfer the goods from one layer to another.
- 25 Fig. 7 shows a second embodiment of transfer means.
- Fig. 8 shows a third embodiment of transfer means.
- 30 Fig. 9 shows a top view of an embodiment of a variable store, including an inner and an outer variable capacity store, where both variable capacity stores are full,

- Fig. 10 show a perspective view of the outer variable store only,
- Fig. 11 show a perspective view of the inner variable store only,
- 5 Fig. 12 shows a top view of an embodiment of a variable store, including an inner and an outer variable capacity store, where the outer variable capacity store is full and the inner variable capacity store is half full,
- 10 Fig. 13 shows a top view of an embodiment of a variable store, including an inner and an outer variable capacity store, where the outer variable capacity store is full and the inner variable capacity store is empty,
- 15 Fig. 14 shows a top view of an embodiment of a variable store, including an inner and an outer variable capacity store, where the outer variable capacity store and the inner variable capacity store are empty,
- 20 Fig. 15 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a variable store arrangement including an inner and an outer variable capacity store.

MODE(S) FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

- 25 In figure 1 a top view of a conveyor means 1 is shown. The conveyor means 1 is intended to be used in a variable capacity store including a plurality of layers, each including a conveyor means 1, superimposed on top of each other. The conveyor means 1 includes an endless conveyor 2 being arranged
- 30 in a generally H-shaped pattern including two parallel elongated 3, 4 portions and a transverse portion 5. The endless conveyor 2 rests on a frame 6. The frame includes a first and a second parallel support rails 7,8 and a transverse

support bar 9. The parallel support rails 7,8 are arranged to support the parallel elongated portions 3, 4 of the endless conveyor and the support bar 9 is arranged to support the transverse portion 5.

- 5 The transverse support bar 5 is movably arranged along the length of the parallel support rails 7,8. By movement of the transverse support bar 9, the position of the transverse portion of the endless conveyer 2 will be altered. Movement of the transverse support bar 9 is accomplished by a drive motor 10 (fig. 3), which engages a guide bar 11 extending in the same direction as the support rails 7,8. The transverse support 9 bar is slidably arranged in the support rails 7,9 by engagement of a notch (not shown) in a longitudinally extending groove 12 (fig 3) in a side portion of the support rail 7,8. In order to limit the movement of the transverse support bar 9 end stops 16, 17 can be provided at respective end of the guide bar 11.
- 10

15

- The endless conveyor 2 is by said transverse portion 5, divided into an active path A positioned one side of the transverse portion and a passive path P positioned on the other side. The endless conveyor 2 enters at a first end 20 of the first support rail, where, according to the embodiment shown in figure 1, the conveyer 2 is flexed, from running on the bottom side 14 of the first support rail 7, to run in the opposite direction on the top side 13 of the first support rail 7. The conveyer 2 runs toward the transverse support bar 9, which supports a curved transverse portion 21 of the conveyer 2. The curved transverse portion 21 of the conveyer 2 can be arranged in a manner known to the skilled in the art, for example via a curved track or by locally flexing the conveyers at the ends of the transverse support bar 9. The conveyer leaves the transverse support bar 9 to be supported by the second support rail 8.
- 20
- 25

- 30 The conveyer further extends toward a first end 22 of the second support rail 8, where the conveyer 2 is flexed from running on the top side 13 of the second support rail 8 to run in the opposite direction on the bottom side 14 of the second support rail 8. The conveyer further runs on the bottom side 14 of

the second support rail 8 toward a second end portion 23 of the second support rail 8, where the conveyer 2 is flexed, from running on the bottom side 14 of the second support rail 8, to run in the opposite direction on the top side 13 of the second support rail 8. The conveyer 2 further runs toward the 5 transverse support bar 9, where a flexed transverse portion 24 of the conveyer 2, which is included in the passive path P, it is flexed toward the first support rail 7. The flexed transverse portion 24 of the conveyer 2 can be arranged in a manner known to the skilled in the art, for example by locally flexing the conveyers by roller wheels 25, 26 at the ends of the transverse 10 support bar 9 as shown in the embodiment shown in fig. 1 or via a curved track. Leaving the flexed transverse portion 24, the conveyer 2 further extends toward a second end 27 of the first support rail 7. At the second end 27 of the first support rail, the conveyer is flexed from running on the top side 13 of the first support rail 7 to run in the opposite direction on the bottom side 14 of the first support rail 7. The conveyer further runs on the bottom side 14 of the first support rail 7 toward the first end portion 20 of the first support rail 7, where the conveyer 2 is flexed, from running on the bottom side 14 of the first support rail 7, to run in the opposite direction on the top side 13 of the first support rail 7, where it first entered.

20

The transverse support bar supports the curved transverse portion 21 and the flexed transverse portion 24 of the conveyer. The active path A includes the portion of the conveyor 2 extending from the first end 20 of the first support rail 7 to the first end 22 of the second conveyer 8. The active path A 25 also includes the curved transverse portion 21. Furthermore the active path A includes transfer means 19 (figs. 4 – 7) connecting active paths of conveyor means of different layers of conveyor means.

The passive path P includes the portions 28, 29 (fig 2) of the conveyor 2 which extends along the bottom side 14 of the first and second support rails 7,8. Furthermore, the passive path P includes the portion of the conveyor which extends from the second end 23 of the second support rail 8 to the

second end 27 of the first support rail 7. This portion includes the flexed portion 24, which is carried by the transverse support bar.

By changing the position of the transverse support bar 9 along the support rails 7,8, the relative proportion between the active path A and passive path P is changed.

In figure 2, the conveyer means shown in figure 1 is shown from a view below. The bottom side 14 of the first and second support rails 7,8 carries portions 28, 29 of the conveyer, which form part of the passive path P. Furthermore the guide bar 11 extending along the length of the support rails 7,8 is shown. The bottom side of the transverse support bar 9 carries a drive motor 15 for changing the position of the transverse support bar 9 via engagement to a guide bar 11.

15

In figure 4 a top view of the conveyor in fig 1 is shown, where the transverse support bar 9 is moved to an end position E, wherein the storage capacity is at a minimum for the store. Furthermore a first embodiment of transfer means 19 for transferring goods from one layer to another layer in the set of H-shaped endless conveyors stacked on top of each other is attached at an end 30 of the conveyer means 1 on which the active path A is situated. In the shown embodiment the transfer means 19 is formed by a separate curved conveyor, which preferably is arranged as an endless conveyor. The transfer means 19 is attached to outgoing portion of the endless conveyor 2 where, that is at the first end 22 of the second support rail 8, where a transfer from the active path A on the top side 13 of the second support rail 8 to the passive path P on the bottom side 14 occurs. The transfer means, which is included in the active path A, lead toward the first end 20' of the first support rail 7' of a conveyer means 1 positioned on top of the conveyer means 1 shown in figure 4.

In figure 5 an end view of a set of conveyer means, including a first- 1, a second- 1', a third 1" and a fourth- 1"" conveyor means, which are positioned on top of each other are shown. A first, second and third transfer means 19, 19', 19" are arranged for connecting the active paths A, A', A", A"" of 5 respective conveyer means.

In figure 6 a first alternative embodiment of the transfer means 19 is shown. Here the second support rail 8 is extended and comprises a curved portion 31. The curved portion 31 is also inclined upwards in a vertical direction such 10 that it connects the incoming end 20' of the first support rail 7' in a conveyor means 1' positioned on top of the conveyor means 1, which carries the curved portion. The first end 22 of the second support rail is adjoined to the first end 20' of the first support 7' of the conveyor means 1' such that a transfer from a first conveyor means 1 to a second conveyor means 1' 15 positioned on top of said first conveyor means is possible.

In stead of extending the second support rail 8 it is possible to prolong the first support rail. In this case the first support rail 7' of the second conveyer means 1' would be extended and would comprise a curved portion. The 20 curved portion would be inclined downwards in a vertical direction such that it connects the outgoing end 22 of the second support rail 8 in a conveyor means 1 positioned below the conveyor means 1', which carries the curved portion.

25 Figure 7 show a third embodiment of the transfer means 19. According to this embodiment both the first guide rail 7' of a second conveyer means 1' and the second guide rail 8 of the first conveyor means are extended to include curved portions 32, 33. The curved portions are positioned such that they connect each other such that transfer between respective conveyor means 30 are possible.

- According to the invention the transfer means cab be either formed as separate means such as shown in figure 4 or by extension of the first guide rail, the second guide rail or both the first and second guide rail in a manner so as to connect the outgoing end of a conveyor means with an incoming end
- 5 in another conveyor means positioned on top. An incoming end is an edge portion of a conveyor means where an endless conveyor flexes from the bottom off a guide rail to the top of the guide rail at a position where the conveyor on the topside is running from the edge.
- 10 Figure 8 shows a variable capacity store 34 according to the invention in use as a variable capacity store for elongated articles. The store is fed with elongated articles, in particular tobacco products from a manufacturing unit 35. The elongated articles are elevated by an elevator unit 35' to the top level of the variable capacity store 34. The elongated articles enters the variable
- 15 capacity store 34 at an input track 36, which in this example is positioned at the highest conveyor means 37" in a set of three conveyer means 37 – 37". In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the transverse portions 38 – 38" in said set of conveyor means 37 – 37" is individually displaceable along said elongated portion, such that the capacity of each conveyor means in said set
- 20 of conveyor means is controlled independently from the capacity of other conveyor means in said set. In the example shown the lowest conveyor is positioned such that the active path is as large as possible, while the two remaining transverse portions are positioned midways. Naturally, the invention also contemplates the possibility to run the transverse portions in
- 25 pairs or altogether fixed together for simultaneous movement. However, according to the most preferred embodiment the transverse portions are individually moveable for maximum flexibility of the storage capacity.
- The positions of the transverse portions 38- 38 " are controlled by drive units
- 30 connected to guide rails as explained in connection with fig 3. Respective endless conveyor are driven by a single drive unit (not shown) or by a single

drive unit which is connected to respective endless conveyer by a transmission.

The goods leaves the variable capacity store at an output station 39, which in
5 the shown example is positioned at the bottom of the variable capacity store.
From the output station the goods enters a packing machine 40.

In figure 9 a top view of an embodiment of a variable store, including an inner
variable capacity store 100 and an outer variable capacity store 101 is
10 shown. In figure 10 it is shown how the active paths 102, 102', 102'' together
with the transfer means 103,103', 103'' of the first outer variable capacity
store 101 forms a first conveyor path 104. The first transport path 104 is
arranged to perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means 105 to
the next conveyor means 105' etc. in a set (105 – 105'') of conveyor means
15 in a first direction indicated with arrow 106 in an upward route of track. Each
transport means (105 – 105'') and the transfer means 103,103',103'' between
the transport means are arranged in the manner described above. The set
(105 – 105'') of conveyor means includes an infeed track 107, where goods
are delivered to the variable capacity store, and an exit path 108, which leads
20 to an inner variable capacity store 100.

In figure 11 it is shown how the active paths 109, 109', 109'' together with the
transfer means 110, 110', 110'' of the second inner variable capacity store
100 forms a second conveyor path 111. The second conveyor path 111 is
25 arranged to perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means 112''
to the next conveyor means 112' in a set of conveyor means (112 – 112'') in
a second direction opposite to said first direction in a downward route of
track. The second direction is indicated with an arrow 113. Each transport
means (112 – 112'') and the transfer means 110,110',110'' between the
30 transport means are arranged in the manner described above. The set (112 –
112'') of conveyor means includes an infeed track 114 which receives goods

from the outer variable capacity store 101 and an exit track 115, where goods are delivered from the variable capacity store.

- The first outer variable capacity store includes elongated portions 116, 117.
- 5 The second inner variable capacity store includes similar elongated portions 118, 119. The elongated portions 118, 119 of the second inner variable capacity store 100 are positioned between the elongated portions 116, 117 of the first variable capacity store 101.
- 10 Furthermore the transfer means 110 of the second inner variable capacity store 101 is positioned between the transfer means 103 and the transverse portions 120 – 120" of the first outer 101 variable capacity store.

The first conveyor path is thus essentially circumventing the second
15 transportation path.

- Figures 12 – 14 show a top view of an embodiment of a variable store, including an inner and an outer variable capacity store, where the inner and outer capacity stores are filled to different levels.
- 20

Figure 15 show a perspective view of a variable store, including an inner and an outer variable capacity store.

- Figures 12 – 15 includes the same features as explained in relation to figures
25 9 – 11 and will therefore not be described in full detail.

The invention shall not be restricted to the embodiments described above, but can be varied within the scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

- 1 A variable capacity store comprising a set of conveyor means superpositioned on top of and connected to each other, characterised in that each conveyor means includes an endless conveyor being arranged in a generally H-shaped pattern including two parallel elongated portions and a transverse portion, which is movable along said elongated portions, wherein said H-shaped pattern is, by said transverse portion, divided into an active path positioned one side of the transverse portion and a passive path positioned on the other side, wherein the capacity of the conveyor means is arranged to be varied by displacing the transverse portion and thereby increasing or decreasing the proportion between the active path and passive path.
- 15
- 2 A variable capacity store according to claim 1, characterised in that said H-shaped endless conveyors are connected to each other by transfer means connecting active paths of different conveyor means.
- 20
- 3 A variable capacity store according to claim 2, characterised in that said transfer means is formed by a curved conveyor path extending from an end of an elongated portion on one side of a first generally H-shaped endless conveyor toward an end of an elongated portion on the opposite side of a second generally H-shaped endless conveyor positioned on top of said first generally H-shaped endless conveyor.
- 25
- 4 A variable capacity store according to claim 3, characterised in that said curved conveyor path is formed by an extension of said endless conveyor forming a generally H-shaped endless conveyor in one or both of two interconnected conveyor means
- 30

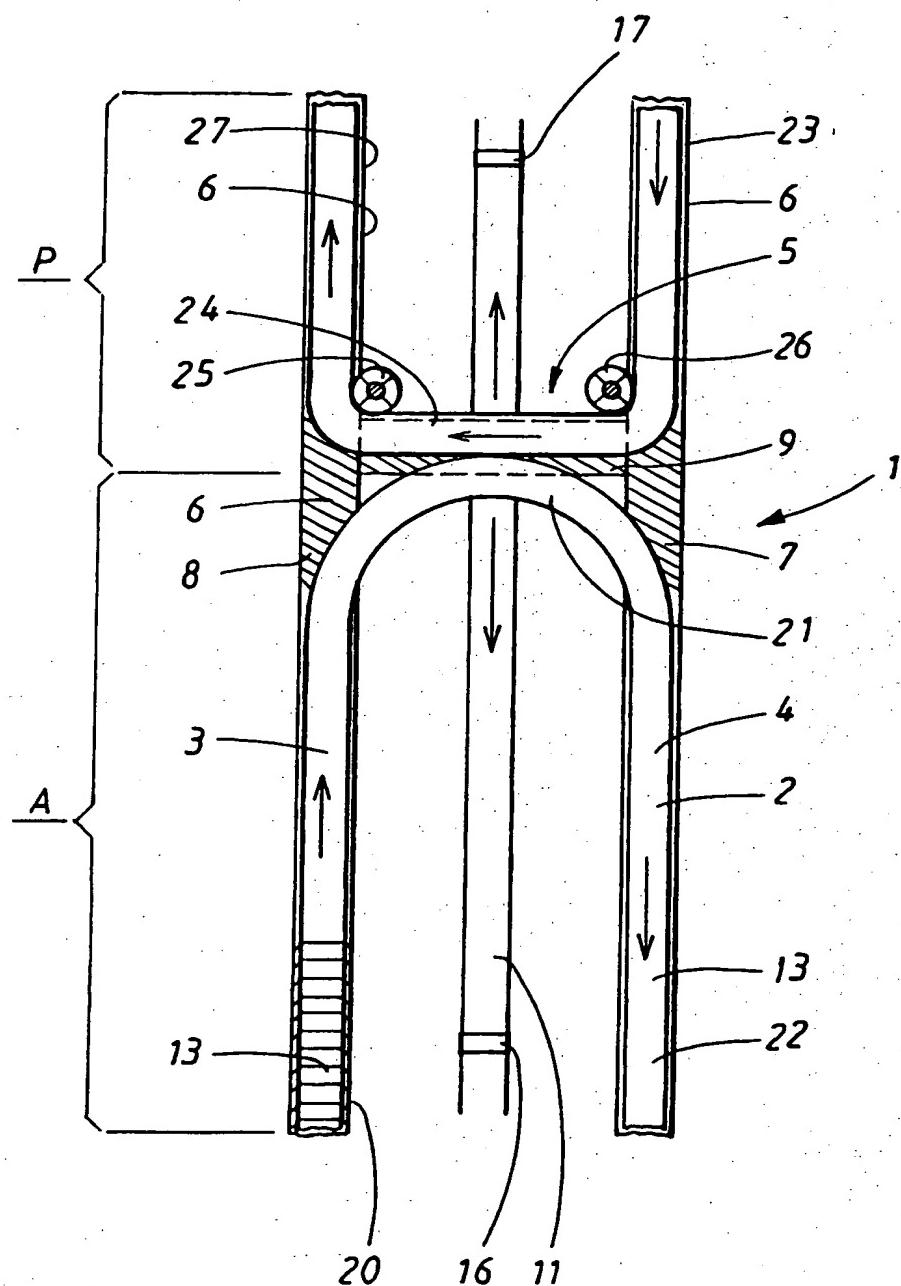
superpositioned on top of and connected to each other.

- 5 A variable capacity store according to any of the preceding claims, characterised in that each transverse portion in said set of conveyor means is individually displaceable along said elongated portion, such that the capacity of each conveyor means in said set of conveyor means is controlled independently from the capacity of other conveyor means in said set.
- 10 6 A variable store arrangement comprising a first and a second variable capacity store according to any of claims 1 – 5 , wherein the active paths together with the transfer means of the first variable capacity store forms a first conveyor path which is arranged to perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means to the next conveyor means in said set of conveyor means in a first direction, the active paths together with the transfer means of the second variable capacity store forms a second conveyor path which is arranged to perform transportation of goods from one conveyor means to the next conveyor means in said set of conveyor means in a second direction opposite to said first direction, the elongated portions of the second variable capacity store are positioned between the elongated portions of the first variable capacity store and the transfer means of the second variable capacity store is positioned between the transfer means and the transverse portion of the second variable capacity store, whereby the first conveyor path is essentially circumventing the second transportation path.
- 15 20 25 30 7 A variable store arrangement according to claim 6, characterised in that said generally H-shaped patterns of said first variable

capacity store is vertically displaced from said generally H-shaped patterns of said second variable capacity store.

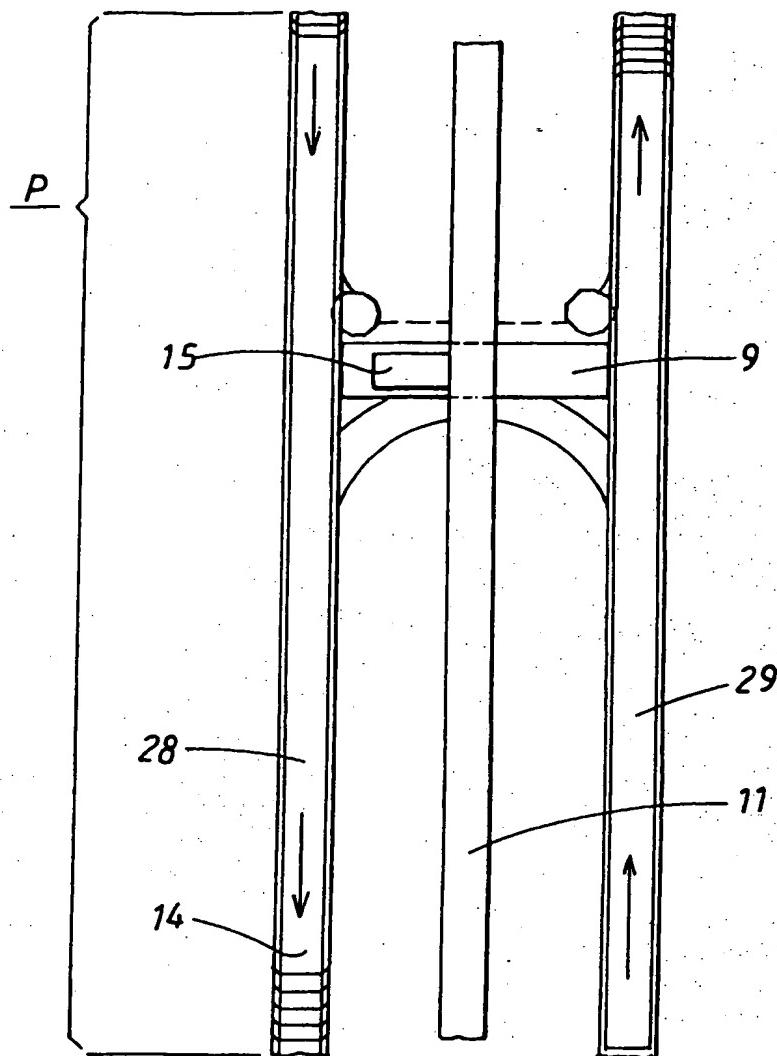
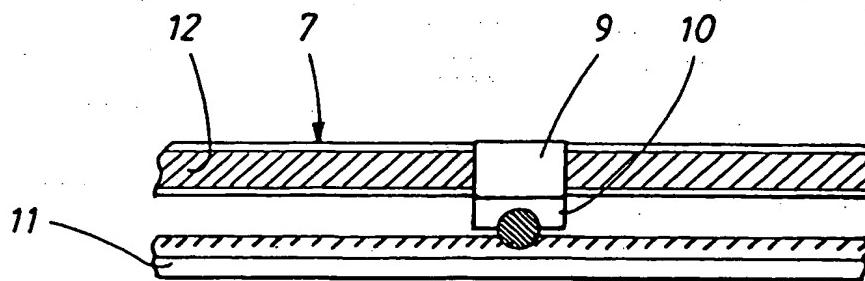
10/550261

1/12

FIG. 1

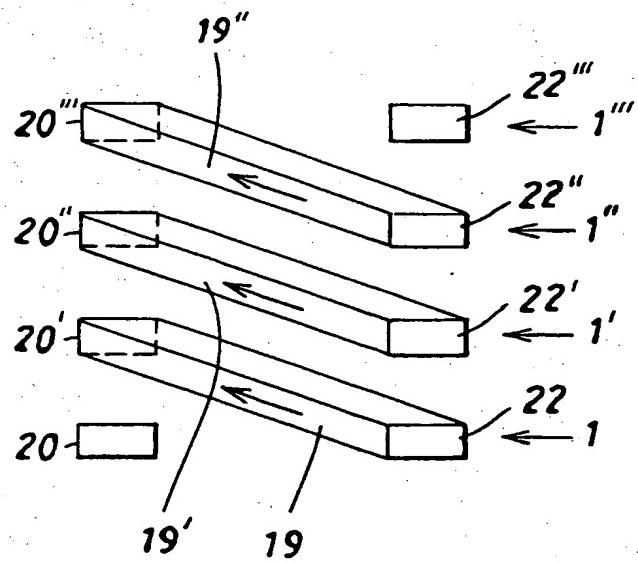
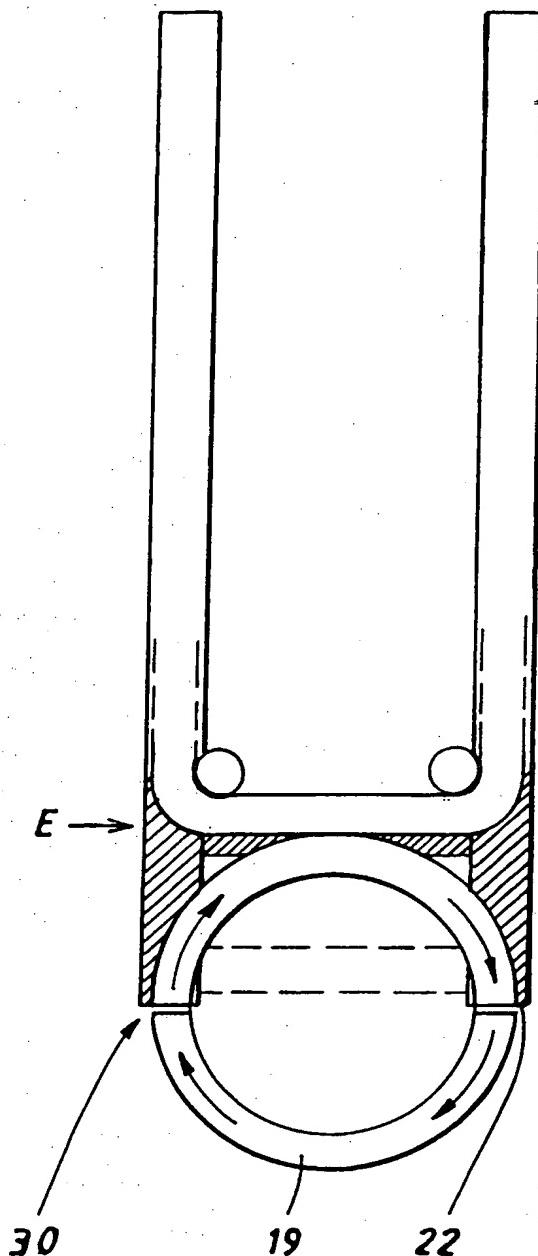
10/550261

2/12

FIG. 2FIG. 3

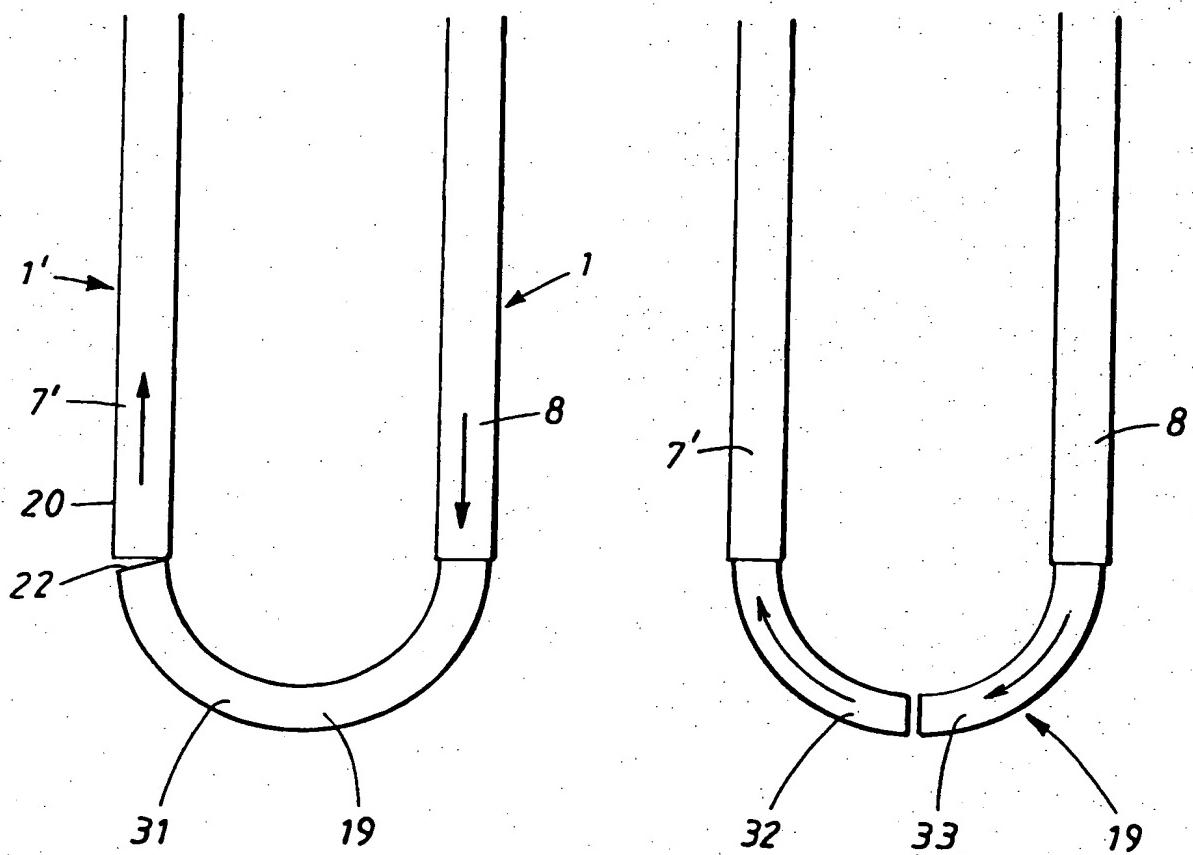
10/550261

3/12



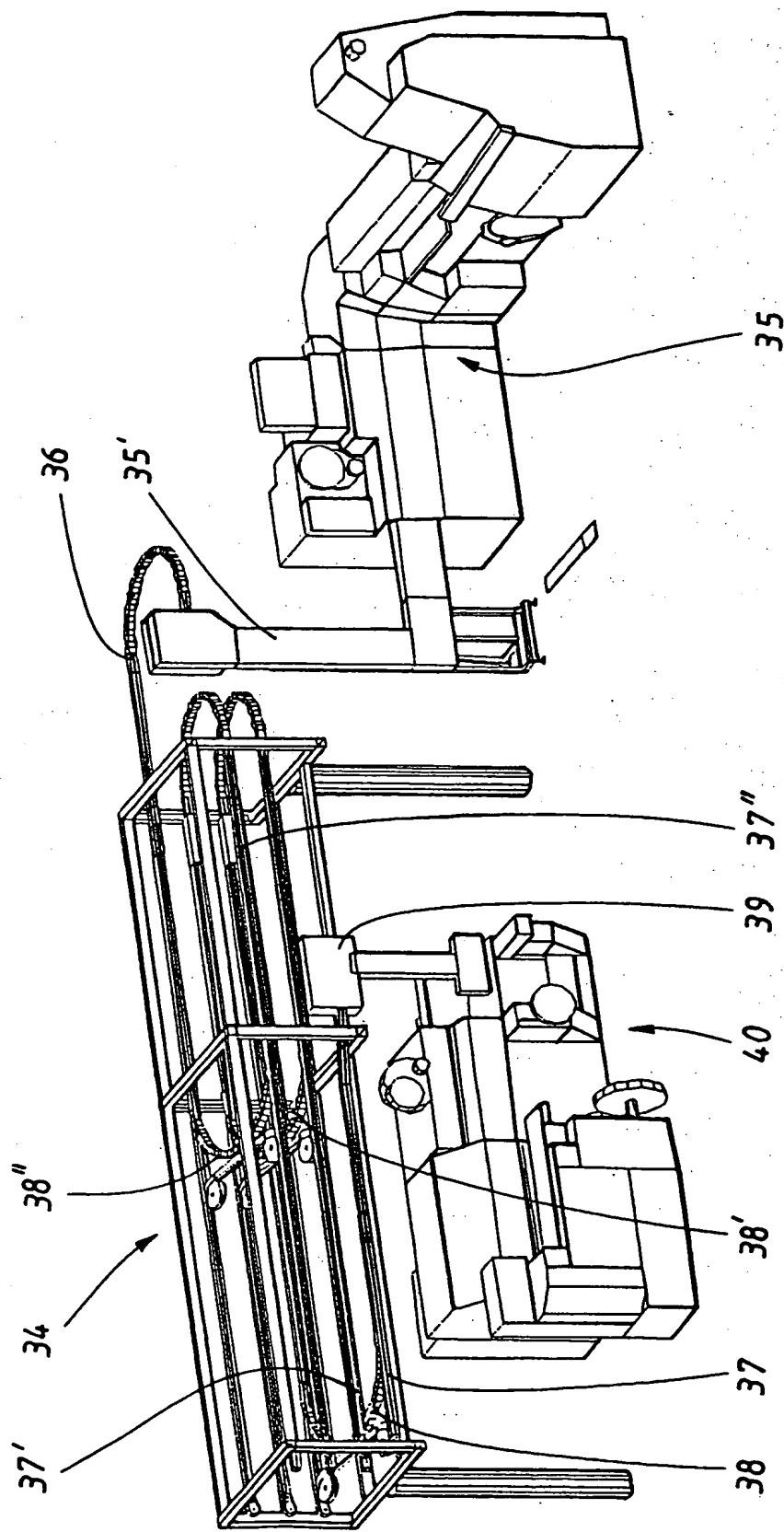
4/12

10/550261

FIG. 6FIG. 7

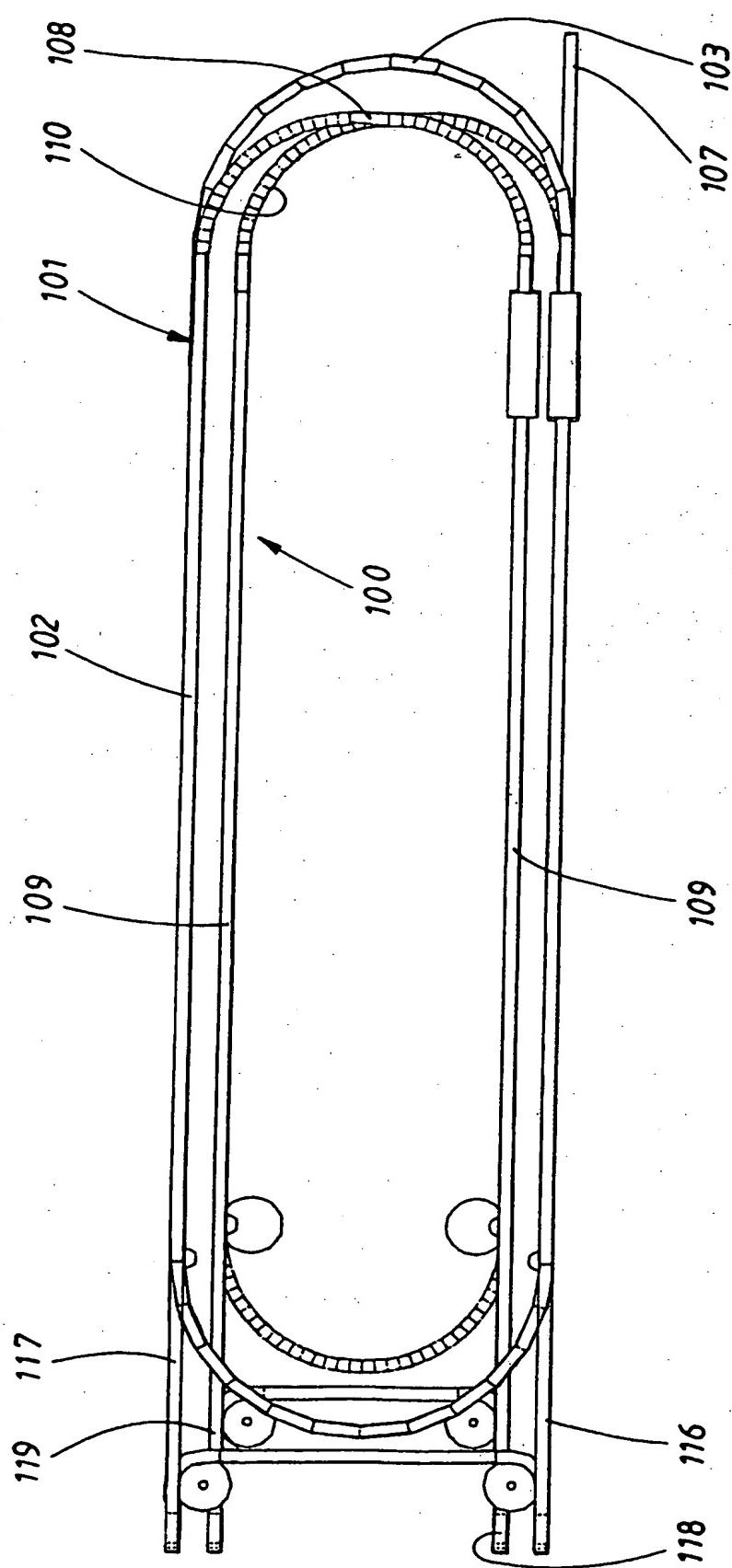
5/12

10/550261

FIG. 8**SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)**

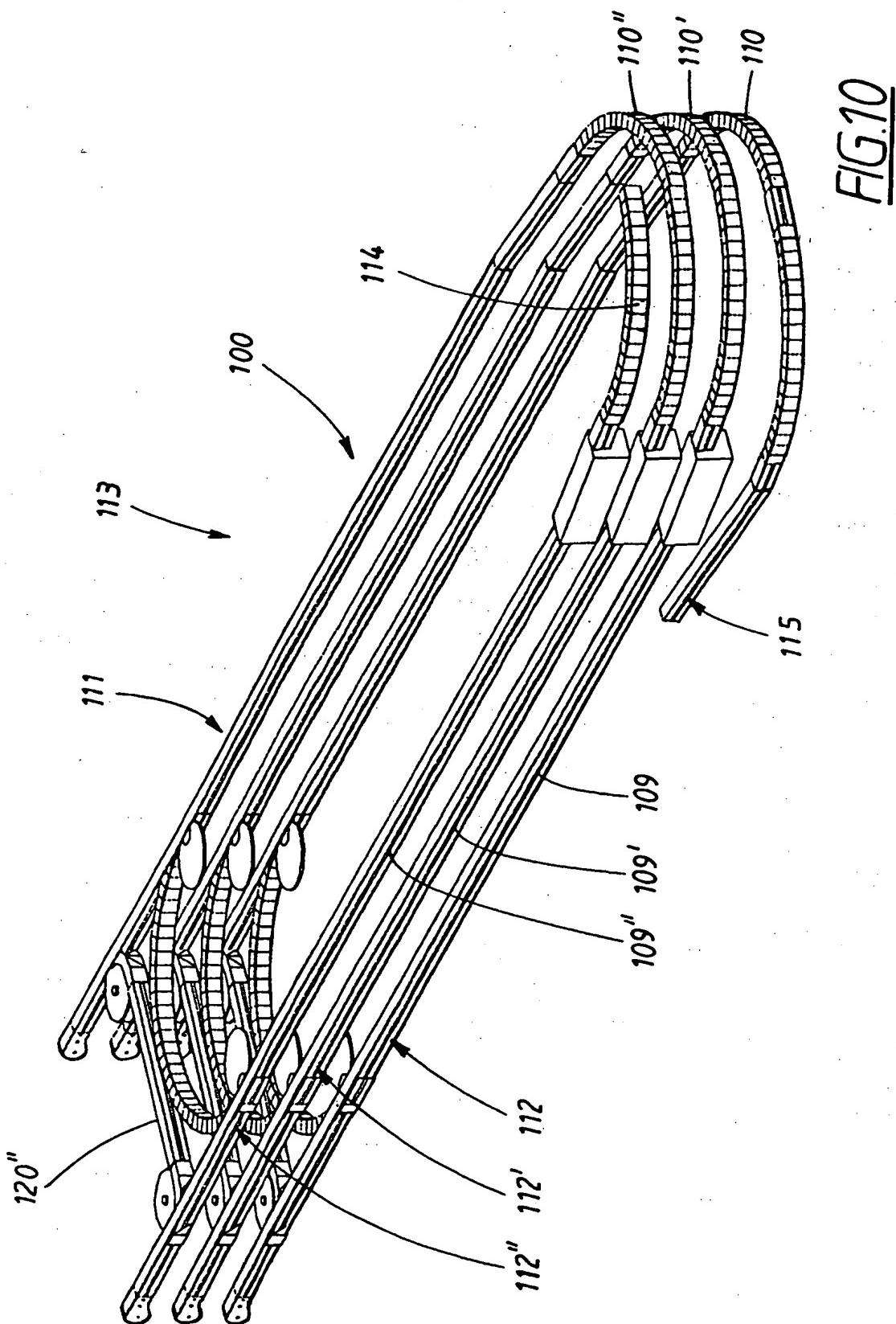
6/12

10/550261

FIG. 9

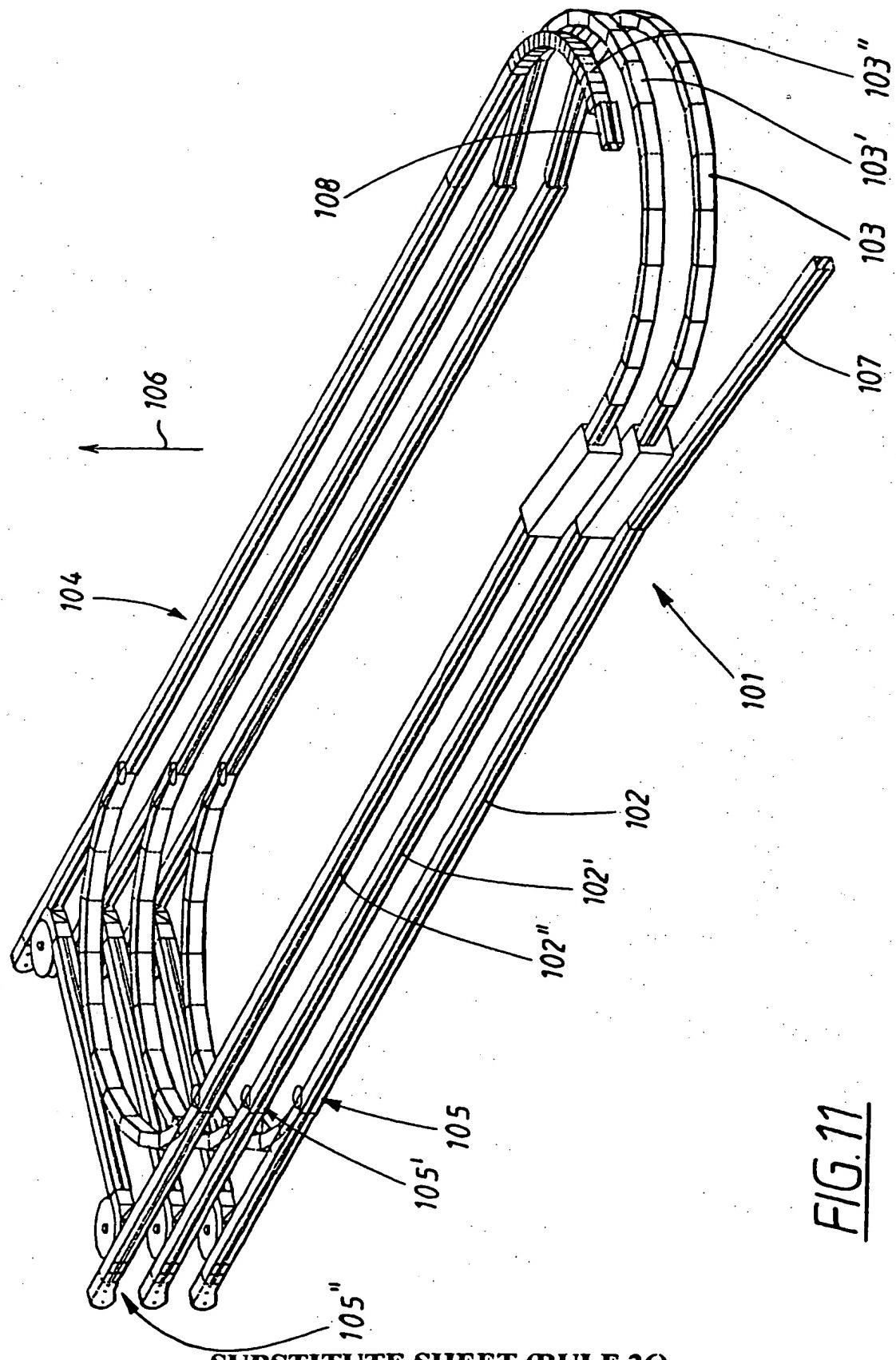
10/550261

7/12

FIG.10

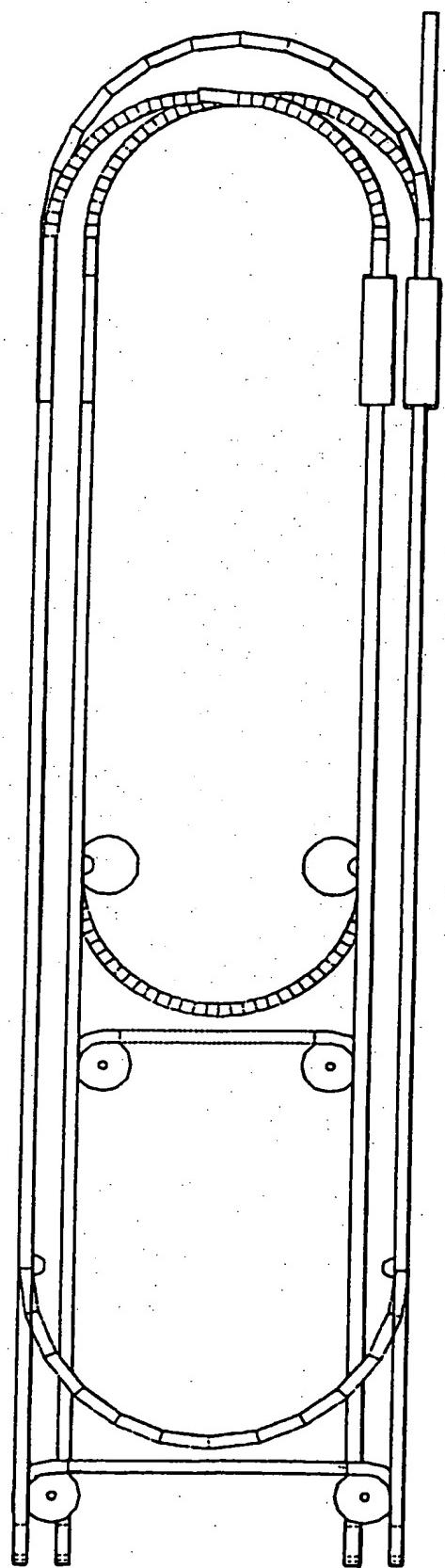
8/12

10/550261

**SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)**FIG. 11

9/12

10/550261

FIG. 12**SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)**

10/12

10/550261

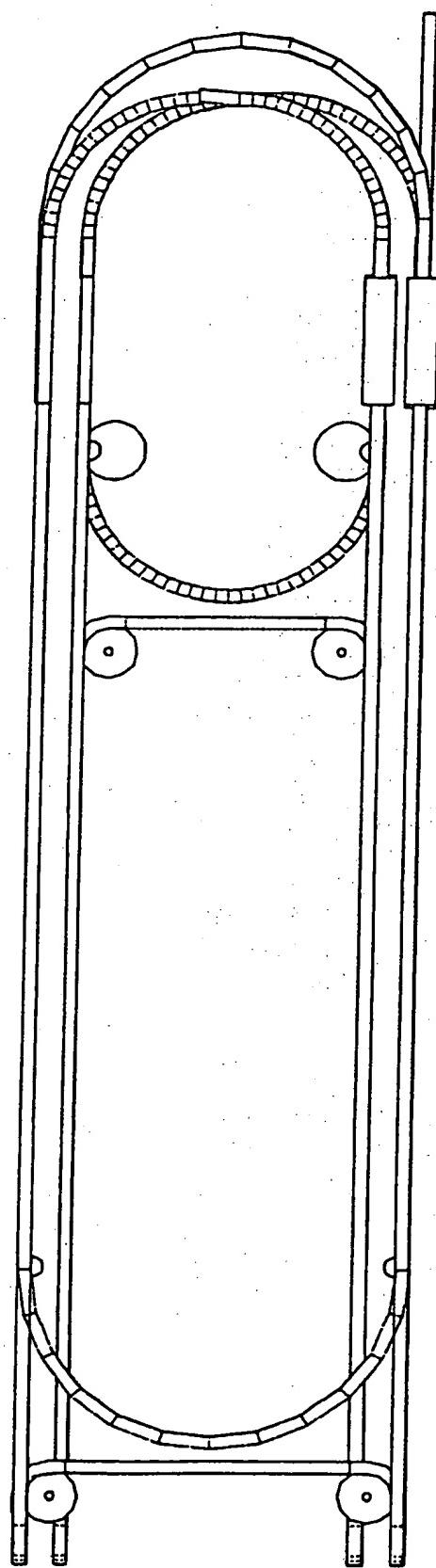


FIG. 13

11/12

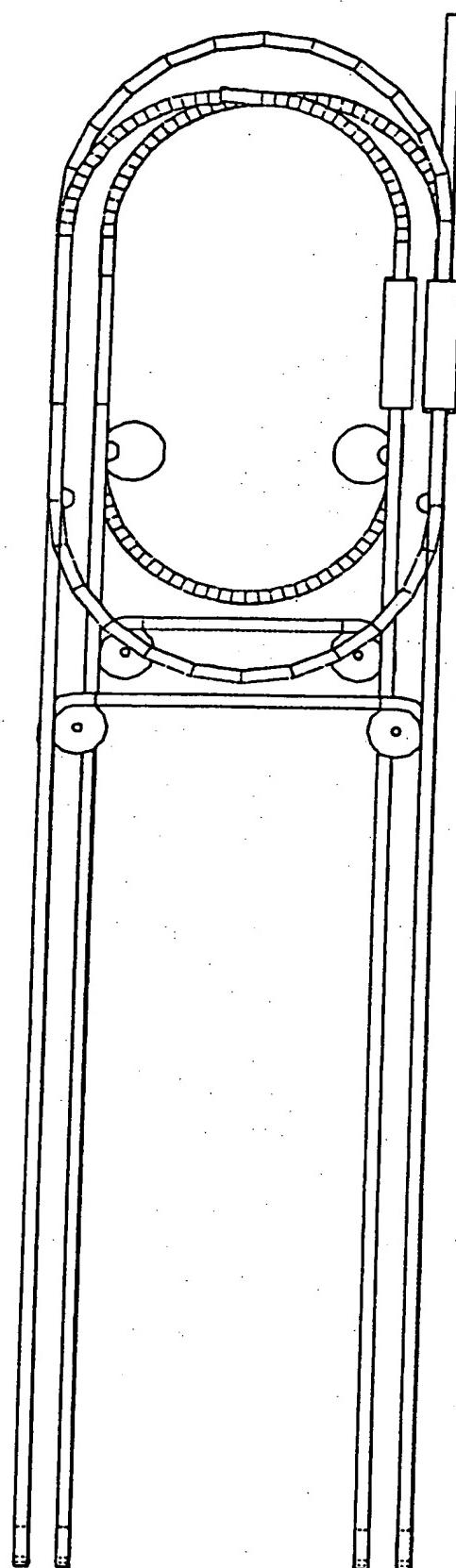
10/550261

FIG. 14

12/12

10/550261

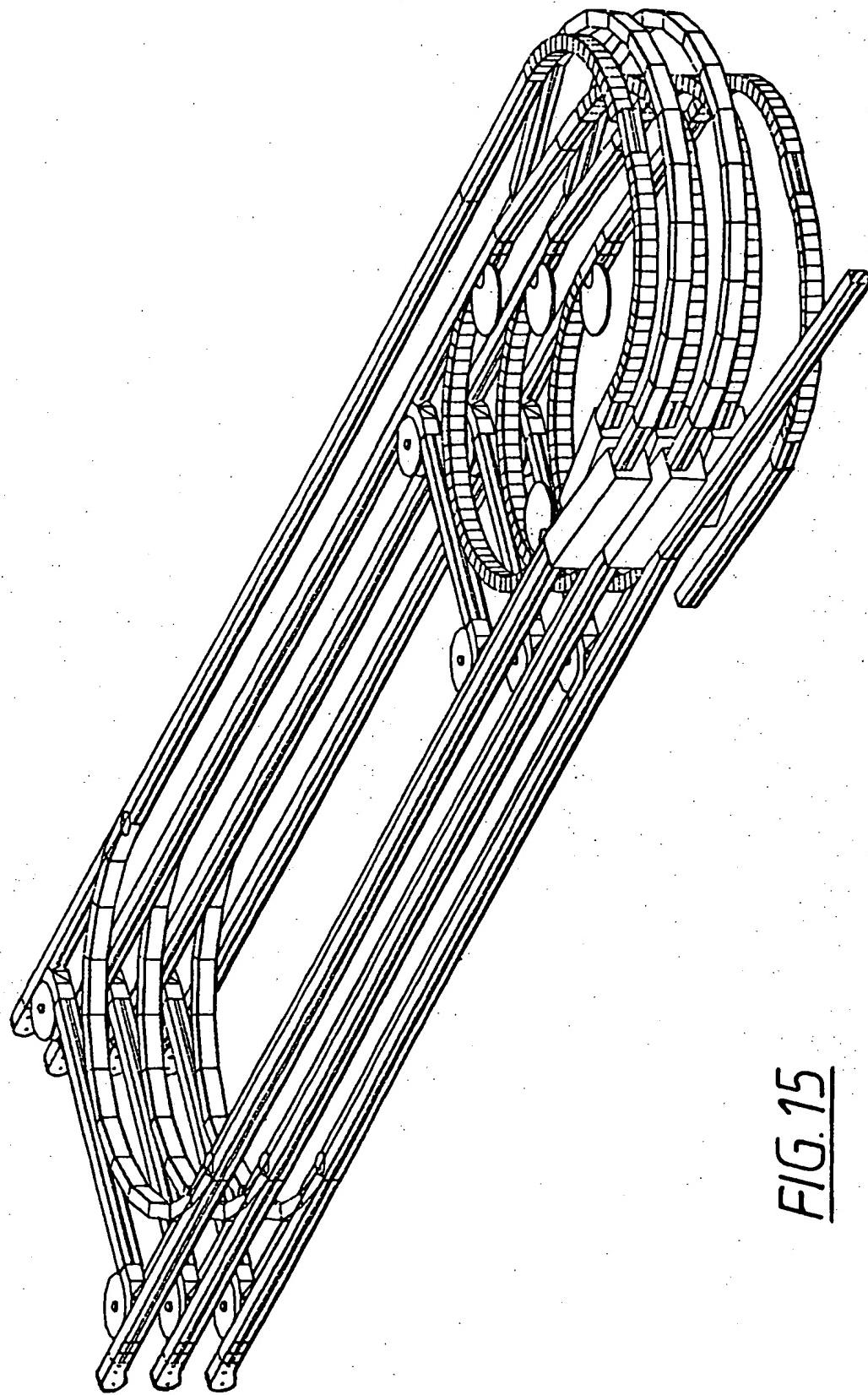


FIG. 15

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/SE 2004/000419

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC7: B65G 47/52, B65G 63/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC7: B65G

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

SE,DK,FI,NO classes as above

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-INTERNAL, WPI DATA

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 02085144 A1 (G D SOCIETA' PER AZIONI), 31 October 2002 (31.10.2002), figures 1,2, claims 1-7 --	1-5
A	US 6065585 A (BRYANT ET AL), 23 May 2000 (23.05.2000), column 1, line 49 - column 5, line 18, figure 11, claims 1-7 --	6-7
A	DE 2744446 A1 (C KELLER GMBH U CO KG), 5 April 1979 (05.04.1979), page 4 - page 5, figure 1, claims 3,4 --	1-7

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

- * Special categories of cited documents
- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed
- "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- "X" document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- "Y" document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
- "&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

10 June 2004

Date of mailing of the international search report

17-06-2004

Name and mailing address of the ISA/
Swedish Patent Office
Box 5055, S-102 42 STOCKHOLM
Facsimile No. + 46 8 666 02 86

Authorized officer

Igor Gazdik/EK
Telephone No. + 46 8 782 25 00

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/SE 2004/000419

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	GB 2143788 A (BRITISH-AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY LTD), 20 February 1985 (20.02.1985), page 1, line 10 - line 44, figure 1, claims 1-3,5-7 -- -----	1-7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

30/04/2004

International application No.	
PCT/SE 2004/000419	

WO	02085144	A1	31/10/2002	EP	1381290 A	21/01/2004
				IT	B020010227 A	18/10/2002
US	6065585	A	23/05/2000	DE	19546079 A	13/06/1996
				GB	2296000 A,B	19/06/1996
				GB	2326146 A,B	16/12/1998
				GB	2331975 A,B	09/06/1999
				GB	2332662 A,B	30/06/1999
				GB	9425157 D	00/00/0000
				GB	9524902 D	00/00/0000
				GB	9815491 D	00/00/0000
				GB	9905621 D	00/00/0000
				GB	9911290 D	00/00/0000
				IT	1276236 B	27/10/1997
				IT	RM950804 A	12/06/1996
				US	5845758 A	08/12/1998
				GB	9510918 D	00/00/0000
				CN	1079218 B	20/02/2002
				CN	1207019 A	03/02/1999
				DE	69615865 D,T	02/05/2002
				EP	0871379 A,B	21/10/1998
				GB	9524179 D	00/00/0000
				JP	2000500977 T	02/02/2000
				US	6227347 B	08/05/2001
				WO	9719605 A	05/06/1997
DE	2744446	A1	05/04/1979	ES	469230 A	16/07/1979
				FR	2404821 A,B	27/04/1979
				IT	1094721 B	02/08/1985
				IT	7822516 D	00/00/0000
GB	2143788	A	20/02/1985	GB	8319585 D	00/00/0000